



U.S. Department of Justice

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For Immediate Release:

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EVENT: Sentenced

Defendant: Aleksandr Maksimenko

**Livonia Man Sentenced to 14 Years in Prison and \$1.5 Million in Restitution for
Forcing Eastern European Women to Work at Detroit Area Strip Clubs**

Aleksandr Maksimenko, age 27, was sentenced today to 168 months (14 years) in prison and over \$1.5 million in restitution for his role as one of the ring-leaders in a conspiracy to force Eastern European women to work as exotic dancers in Detroit area strip clubs, Stephen J. Murphy, United States Attorney, Eastern District of Michigan, and Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, announced. United States District Judge Victoria A. Roberts sentenced Maksimenko following his conviction for involuntary servitude, immigration and money laundering conspiracies. Maksimenko is a naturalized U.S. citizen, born in Ukraine, who resided in Livonia, Michigan, at the time of his arrest in mid-February 2005.

"The defendants in this case took advantage of innocent women from Eastern Europe by enticing them to come the United States and then holding them in bondage for commercial and sexual exploitation," said U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy. "In sentencing Mr. Maksimenko to 14 years in prison, the Court underscored the gravity of this type of crime. Criminal operations involving human trafficking, such as this one, will be pursued with the greatest vigor by my office."

“These criminals preyed upon the hopes and dreams of these victims who came to the U.S. for the sole purpose of bettering their lot in life, only to be forced into a life of enslavement, subjected to sexual exploitation, physical violence, and isolation,” said Moskowitz, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Detroit. “ICE will continue to vigorously pursue those organizations that callously trade in human cargo, with no regard for the health or dignity these women, all while reaping the profits from their suffering.”

“With promises of good money, his only intent was to make lots of bad money,” said IRS Special Agent in Charge Maurice Aouate. “IRS-CI continues to work with the law enforcement community to financially disrupt any criminal organization and attack the fuel of their criminal conduct.”

“The FBI is committed to working with its law enforcement partners to investigate aggressively allegations of human trafficking, ” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Arena.

According to court papers, Maksimenko and his business partners operated a human trafficking ring which exploited Eastern European women and used the guise of a legitimate business – Beauty Search, Inc. – to cover their criminal conduct. Maksimenko and his partners smuggled women into the United States and compelled them through threats and coercion to work as dancers in strip clubs. To maintain compliance, Maksimenko and his partners took a number of steps, including confiscating the dancers’ passports; imposing large debts; enforcing rules designed to isolate the dancers through interrogations, monetary penalties, physical violence and threats; searching the dancers’ apartments; and threatening to turn the dancers into authorities because of their illegal immigrant status.

The Court increased Maksimenko’s sentence after finding that Maksimenko sexually abused two of the dancers who labored for Beauty Search. The Court also found that Maksimenko unlawfully took over \$1.5 million in earnings from the dancers. The Court entered a preliminary order of restitution requiring Maksimenko to reimburse the dancers a total of \$1,570,450 in earnings turned over to Beauty Search. The Court further ordered that \$537,043.84 in cash seized by government agents from Maksimenko’s home and safety deposit boxes, as well as about \$30,000 worth of jewelry, be used to satisfy a portion of the

Court's restitution award.

Maksimenko is the third of nine defendants to be sentenced for crimes associated with this trafficking conspiracy. Still to be sentenced is another of the ring-leaders of the scheme – Michail Aronov, a Lithuanian citizen from the Chicago area, who pled guilty to conspiring to violate the civil rights of the dancers through involuntary servitude, as well as immigration, money laundering, and obstruction conspiracies. Aronov is scheduled to be sentenced on August 16, 2007, at 2 p.m. Others who have been convicted in the prosecution include the following:

Duay Joseph Jado, a Greek citizen from the Skokie, Illinois area, who was sentenced to 46 months in prison for setting fire to the car of one of the dancers in retaliation for her escape from Beauty Search, for failing to repay a debt allegedly owed to Beauty Search, and to send a message to other dancers not to follow in her footsteps

Evgeniy Prokopenko and Alexander Bondarenko, two Ukrainian citizens residing in Brooklyn, NY, pled guilty to visa fraud, admitting that they entered into sham marriages in 2004 with two of the dancers in order to permit the dancers to gain entry into the United States.

Anna Gonikman-Starchenko, a Ukrainian citizen living in the Detroit metro area, pled guilty to obstruction-related charges stemming from actions taken following the arrests of Maksimenko and Aronov. Gonikman-Starchenko is scheduled to be sentenced on June 28, 2007 at 10:30 a.m.

Niki Papoutsaki, a Greek citizen living in the Detroit metro area, pled guilty to misprision of a felony in connection with obstruction-related activity. Papoutsaki is scheduled to be sentenced on June 28, 2007 at 10:00 a.m.

Valentina Maksimenko, a naturalized U.S. citizen residing in the Chicago area, pled guilty to a conspiracy to obstruct justice during the course of the federal investigation. Valentina Maksimenko is scheduled to be sentenced on June 28, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.

The government's investigation and prosecution of others involved in the trafficking scheme is continuing. The case is being investigated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, and the State Department Diplomatic Security Service. Assistant United States Attorney Mark Chutkow and Luis de Baca, Senior Litigation Counsel at the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Criminal Section, are prosecuting the case. Peter Ziedas, Assistant United States Attorney is handling the asset forfeiture part of the case.